

THE ROYAL COMMISSION ON WELSH MONUMENTS.

THE first meeting of the Royal Commission on Ancient Welsh Monuments in Wales and Monmouthshire, was held in London on Friday, September 11. Sir John Rhys, the Chairman of the Commission, after recounting the terms of reference, expressed his views as to the nature and scope of the Commission's work, and the lines upon which he proposed to direct its course.

"The work," he said, "would not be difficult if they proceeded from county to county and parish to parish, and simply drew up a bare list or inventory of the objects of antiquarian and historical interest therein; but it was clear that such an inventory would be of no scientific value unless those objects were classified according to their character, intention, and probable date. It was only by a comparative method that they could hope to answer many of the questions with which they would be confronted, and it was desirable, therefore, that the classificatory system adopted by the Commission should be uniform with that in use by other commissions of a similar character. With regard to ancient earthworks, he thought it would be better to adopt the divisions suggested by the Congress of Archaeological Societies in 1901. No specific power was given to the Commission under which they could engage in exploratory work for the purpose of ascertaining the age or character of any particular object, though it was difficult to see how without such guidance the classification of some objects could be determined satisfactorily."

He thought the county might be taken as a proper area unit. It is proposed to publish county inventories as soon as they are finished, and thus make them available for use at once. A preliminary list of the monuments within a given county would be framed from the 6-inch Ordnance map, and supplemented by inquiries that would be made through the local secretaries and primary schools. He suggested that the sympathy and the assistance of the county councils should be sought, and that circulars should be sent to the numerous class of bards and literati, and those whom the secretaries might find interested in the work. A bibliography on the subject would be collected, and personal visits must be undertaken to the various monuments within the counties. "Those visits could be undertaken by the secretaries. It was inevitable that in the course of such work it would be found that there were monuments that, owing to the complexity of structure and other matters, must be inspected by the whole Commission, and they would have to settle points that were important and also disputed."

The points cited from the chairman's address show what a great work the Commission has undertaken. It is thought that it will take three years at least to complete its task.

Like all bodies representative of the whole Welsh nation, the Commission is very strong on the literary side, and the bibliography and all historical matter will be of the greatest value to archaeologists. There is little reason to be dissatisfied with the purely scientific element in the Commission, providing that important scientific methods will not be decided upon merely by a show of hands. The chairman's remarks warrant our highest expectations as to the thoroughness with which the work will be done.

Though the Commission is not specifically empowered to engage in exploratory work, it is clear by the proposal to make personal visits to the monuments that a work more urgent and far easier than any explanatory work can and most likely will be

done, namely, an astronomical survey of all monuments which lend themselves to such an inquiry. No body of experts would make such visits without an ordinary compass. All that would be required in order to make the astronomical survey of sufficient value would be a clino-compass, and sufficient acquaintance with the "run" of astronomical monuments to be able to find out alignments, to take their orientation and the height of the horizon in the same direction.

At least three members of the Commission are deeply interested in the astronomical inquiry, and the secretary, Mr. Edward Owen, has already acquainted himself with the results so far obtained in Wales. Neither expense nor time—for a monument could be surveyed in a few minutes—could be pleaded as a reason for neglecting such a golden opportunity of securing comparative data of the greatest interest. It is to be hoped that at the next meeting of the Commission this important matter will be definitely dealt with.

Now that little Wales has been so generously provided for in the matter of this Commission, the question crops up very naturally, Why has not larger England obtained the same privilege?

JOHN GRIFFITH.

DR. SVEN HEDIN'S LATEST EXPLORATIONS.

AN interesting account of Dr. Sven Hedin's latest journey in Tibet is to be found in the *Times* of September 17 and 18, from which we gather the following particulars of the discoveries made by this intrepid explorer.

On March 8 last he came across stone houses, the residence of the local chief, but only a high lama from Lhasa was present, living in a great tent, which was a movable temple, similar to that of the Kalmucks on the Volga, indicating that religious rites are performed among the nomads.

Dr. Sven Hedin then went along the northern edge of the great tract between latitudes 30° and 32°, stretching from his old route to the Brahmaputra, which was the great object of his journey. He marched due south, crossing several ranges all running east and west. He passed the enormous ice mountain of Shakangsham on the east, from which flowed the big river. Thence he went over the Ladang pass into the open valley, and the Bongba province, which no European had ever before entered, lay open before him.

At this point great precautions had to be taken in consequence of the suspicions of the Tibetans, and the leader narrowly escaped detection whilst making barometric observations. However, the danger was averted by the march being diverted to the mountainous country where Lake Chunitso was discovered. Two more ranges were crossed, and then the open plain was reached, bounded southwards by a great mountain range, 2000 miles long, which stretches east and west.

Dr. Sven Hedin was rewarded by discovering the continuity of the chain. He found also that the course of Chartatsango, a big affluent of the Brahmaputra, had been wrongly marked on the maps.

After encountering serious opposition, and his caravan being divided, Dr. Sven Hedin left Bis on May 5, and travelling due north crossed a pass of 1900 feet in the Great Range, and made for Lake Tederam, the existence of which Nain Singh reported in 1873, its real name being Terenam. He found the lake to be long, narrow, and salt, and entirely different from its representation on the map.

He then turned westward and visited the Mending

temple, situated on the bank of the Somathangpo, the largest river in Tibet, without outlet to the ocean. Crossing a range 20,000 feet high, he reached Khala, shown on the maps as a great peak, but really a pass in a high range running from the main system. He then came to Ghalaringtso, which is described in the maps as containing a monastery on an island. Its real name is Ngnanglaringtso, and there are five islands. The shape given in the maps is reported to be wrong, as it runs east and west and is intersected by three rivers. The explorer again crossed the Great Range, and reached Mansorawar on July 26, and thence by known roads made his way to Simla.

Dr. Sven Hedin sums up the results of his explorations as follows:—

"First, the true sources of the Brahmaputra and Indus, and the genetic source of the Sutlej east of Mansorawar Lake.

"Secondly, the exploration of Bongba, which I traversed twice by different routes.

"But the greatest of all is the discovery of that continuous mountain chain which, taken as a whole, is the most massive range on the crust of the earth, its average height above sea level being greater than that of the Himalayas. Its peaks are 4000 feet to 5000 feet lower than Everest, but its passes average 3000 feet higher than the Himalayan passes. The eastern and western parts were known before, but the central and highest part is in Bongba, which was previously unexplored. Not a tree or a bush covers it; there are no deep-cut valleys, as in the Himalayas, for rain is scanty. The absolute heights remain to be calculated from observations made on the ten passes which I crossed."

It is stated that the new map of Tibet will be in 900 sheets, and that all the heights of the passes, the river crossings, and the encampments are recorded; a hundred astronomical points have been fixed, and several thousand panoramas have been taken, with compass bearings and names, while many photographs, pencil drawings and water colours have been brought back, together with meteorological observations and a collection of geological specimens, with the dip and fall of the rocks, from 1200 different points. The total length of Dr. Hedin's journeys is estimated at 4000 miles.

NOTES.

ACCORDING to Reuter's Agency, the negotiations which have been in progress for some time between Great Britain and Germany for the conclusion of the agreement to combat sleeping sickness in the African possessions of the two countries are now practically complete. It is thought that the new regulations will become operative on November 1. The convention, which is for a period of three years, provides that British and German doctors and the officials in charge of the concentration camps shall keep in touch with one another to compare the result of their various researches. Segregation camps will be established on either side of the international boundary, while infected natives will be prevented from passing into uninfected districts, such persons being detained and segregated. The convention also provides for the notification to the officials of both Governments of all infected areas, and for taking effective measures for dealing with crocodiles or other animals which may be found to be the food of the fly which carries the disease.

THE death is announced, at the age of eighty-nine years, of Prof. J. G. Hjalmar Kinberg, of Stockholm, well known as a medical practitioner and as a zoologist; also

(at the age of sixty-two years) of Prince Ivan R. Tarkanoff, until 1895 professor of physiology in the Military Academy of St. Petersburg, and since that date *privat-docent* on biology and physiology.

THE death is announced, at the age of sixty-one years, of Mr. George Nicholson, formerly curator of the Royal Gardens, Kew.

A COMMITTEE has been formed, under the chairmanship of ex-President Loubet, for the purpose of erecting a monument to the memory of the late Prof. Cornil at his birthplace, Cusset, near Vichy, France, and a public subscription list for the object in view has been opened.

SOME time ago a subcommittee of the Royal Society of Victoria was appointed to consider the question of establishing a memorial of the late Dr. A. W. Howitt. We learn from the *Victorian Naturalist* that it has now been decided to raise a fund of at least 100l. to found a "Howitt" medal, to be awarded from time to time to the author of distinguished work dealing specially with the natural science of Australia.

WE have to record with regret that a serious accident, attended with a fatal result, happened to the *aéroplane* of Mr. Orville Wright on September 17. The machine, after successfully making several evolutions, suddenly fell to the ground, in consequence, it is stated, of the breaking off of a blade of one of the propellers, and thus disturbing the balance. Mr. Wright sustained a fractured leg, and Lieut. Selfridge, who accompanied him as a passenger, has died from the effects of his injuries.

MR. WILBUR WRIGHT made a successful flight in his *aéroplane* at Le Mans on Monday last. The flight lasted 1h. 31m. 25s., in which time he covered 66 kilometres 600 metres, thus surpassing all previous performances both as to distance and time.

DR. SVEN HEDIN has accepted the invitation to lecture before the German Geographical Society at Berlin on the results of his recent explorations.

ACCORDING to the Stockholm correspondent of the *Globe*, the expedition under Prof. Baron Gerard de Geer, of the Stockholm University, which has been exploring the Spitzbergen group of islands, has just returned. The results (in geography, geology, biology, and hydrography) are reported to be most interesting. They will be submitted to the International Congress of Geology which is to be held at Stockholm in 1910.

ACCORDING to the *Times* of Monday last, the Royal Geographical Society has received information (dated from Khotan, July 15) from Dr. M. A. Stein respecting that explorer's latest archæological and geographical investigations in Central Asia. March and the early part of April were spent in archæological labours along the desert belt adjoining the oasis from Domoko to Khotan. Amongst the ruins newly traced there are the remains of a large Buddhist temple, decorated with elaborate frescoes, now completely buried by high dunes in the desert strip between the Yurung-kash and the Kara-kash rivers. On the curious desert hill of Mazar-tagh, which flanks the Khotan river on the west, some six marches below the Khotan oasis, Dr. Stein discovered the ruins of a fortified watch station once guarding the river route, and from great masses of refuse recovered numerous documents on wood and paper, in a variety of scripts, mainly Indian, Chinese, and Tibetan, and none apparently later than the eighth and ninth centuries A.D., many of which are stated closely to